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ABSTRACT

In the spring of 1982, the Ottawa Board of Education endorsed the concept of a Primary Education Centre (PEC). It opened in the fall of 1982 with four components, namely, the Primary Alternative School (PAS), the Parent Preschool Resource Centre (PPRC), the Carleton Preschool, and the Childbirth Association. This final report is an updating of areas covered in earlier reports with reference made to any changes or modifications over the three years of operation. The views of two specific categories of parents (those whose children had been enrolled in the PAS for all 3 years and those whose children were enrolled for the first time this year) are presented, and the 3 years of operation of the PEC and the third year of PAS are described. The PEC is described in terms of concept, components, and sharing by component elements; PAS is described in terms of personnel, school program, pupils, departures from the school, and parents. Information obtained by parent interviews and questionnaires focuses on the concept of an alternative school, pupil needs, parent participation, modifications needed, and plans for the future. A concluding statement offers recommendations. Appendices provide data about parents' views regarding the opportunity to experience 26 aspects of school life and the questionnaire and structured telephone interview used in the 1985 survey. (RH)

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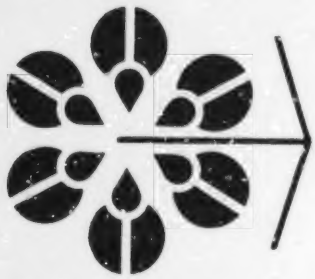

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THE PRIMARY ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

Final Report, 1984-85

Gwyneth A. Watkin
Rosemary G. Bonyun

May 1985

Research Report 85-03

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ABSTRACT

The Primary Alternative School: Final Report
Research Report 85-03

Under the jurisdiction of the Ottawa Board of Education, a new venture in alternative education, the Primary Education Centre (PEC), opened in the fall of 1982 with the Primary Alternative School (PAS) as one of its four components. The other components were the Carleton Preschool, the Parent Preschool Resource Centre (PPRC) and the Childbirth Association. Three interim reports related to this publicly-supported alternative programme (83-04, 84-03 and 84-04) have been produced, outlining the concept of a PEC as a continuum from pre-birth to school age and the philosophy of the PAS and describing its personnel, programme and parent participation for each year of operation. Responses to parent questionnaires and telephone interviews were also reported. Any changes or modifications over the three-year period are noted in the present report (85-03).

Data pertaining to the three years of operation were obtained from (1) interviews with staff members of the PAS, the directors of other components of the PEC and committee chairpersons and (2) written questionnaires and telephone surveys of various categories of parents.

The PPRC aims to support, strengthen and educate parents so that they can in turn ensure the social, physical, emotional and intellectual development of their children. It offers a variety of programmes and services and it prepares for the transition from preschool to kindergarten.

The Carleton Preschool for three- and four-year-olds aims to encourage children to interact with the school's carefully planned

environment and to develop life skills that will enrich the children's present experience and prepare them for living creatively in the future. It provides morning, lunchtime, afternoon and after-four programmes.

These two components together with the PAS are represented on the PEC Management Committee. They cooperate in all aspects of mutual concern, have shared space, equipment and resources and have organized joint activities. The Childbirth Association operated as a component of the PEC for the first year only.

The PAS, for four- to eight-year-olds, is ungraded, assuring flexibility in grouping, thus allowing each child to progress socially and academically at his or her own rate. The aim is to create within the school a warm, happy climate allowing the child to feel secure and confident. Its goals include development of academic excellence in basic concepts and of basic skills, approached through group-oriented and individualized activities and exploration with language, movement, music anmd drama. Flexible scheduling, provision of blocks of time for 'themes', and activity periods during the day are characteristic features of this school.

Parents, under the direction of the principal, are expected to support and to participate in the development of the school as far as their circumstances permit. Parent involvement has been evident during the three years of operation, in the form of school-time volunteering and participation in committee work. The extent and nature of volunteering changed somewhat over the three years. Each year, a few parents were unable to participate for personal reasons; a few changed from active in-school work to assisting in other ways at times conven-

ient to them. Working on one of six committees has been an important feature of volunteer work at this school.

Some changes occurred in staffing, class groupings and programme during the three years. By the third year there was a Principal (0.5 time) and six full-time teachers. In the first year all kindergarten level children were in one group with two teachers and all primary level children in another group with two teachers. In the second and third years the five- and six-year-olds were split with some being placed with a younger group and some with an older group. By the third year the four-year-olds had been placed in a group on their own with one teacher.

The enrolment has increased from 126 pupils in September 1982 to 145 in September 1984, with names on a waiting list by spring 1985. Between the first and second years, about a third of the original pupils left the school; the most frequently given reasons for withdrawal were: enrolment in a French Immersion programme, attendance at a neighbourhood school and limitations of the kindergarten programme. Another group of similar size left the school between the second and third years; nearly a third of these pupils who had not yet reached grade 3 transferred to the newly-opened Primary Alternative West School; about a quarter entered special programmes within the Ottawa Board, such as French Immersion and Special Education. During the third year, a few withdrawals occurred at the kindergarten level because of immaturity and bussing, and at the primary level because of need for a special programme or leaving the city.

Like any school, the PAS includes some children with special needs, some of which cannot be handled at the school. However, exami-

pation of results on standardized tests do not indicate any particular deficits of PAS pupils as a group compared to students across the city.

From parent surveys conducted in the spring of 1983, 1984 and 1985, it appears that families consider of highest importance the flexible, ungraded structure of the PAS and the attention to individual needs, so that children may progress at their own rate. The opportunity for parents to be more involved in the education of their children, the emphasis on experiential methods of instruction and on the development of all facets of the child, and the warm and caring atmosphere of the school are also believed to be desirable characteristics of the PAS which would distinguish it from some other elementary schools. To a large extent, parents see these characteristics as available to children at the PAS and are satisfied with curriculum, methodology, philosophy and communication between parents and staff of the school. On the other hand, many parents expressed concern that their children must leave the school when they reach the junior level; this fact is in itself an endorsement of the concept.

It would seem that time has resolved many of the problems experienced in the first year, when parents and staff were trying to define new roles for themselves and some parents did not see the school evolving as they believed it should. By the third year, there had been changes in both staff and parent groups and the initial high expectations had been somewhat tempered by the effort involved in turning the philosophical concept into a functioning educational institution.

A high proportion of parents have indicated that they have served as a volunteer at the school during the school day; in the first five months of 1983-84, almost 80 per cent of respondents reported some

volunteering of this type. In the first five months of the school's first year, attendance at committee meetings was reported by about a third of parents. In the first two months, two thirds of parents reported that they had attended all-parent meetings. These proportions have decreased somewhat as the school has developed. Questionnaires indicate, however, that between September and January in each academic year the average parent has given about 25 hours to school-related activities, both volunteering during the school day and participation in after-school meetings.

The PAS appears to provide an environment where a group of children in a relatively restricted age range are brought together with teachers who demonstrate a high degree of dedication to their job, creativity in teaching methods and warmth towards young children. The parents as a group appear to be particularly concerned about the education of their children and willing to assist the teachers in providing more individual attention and effectively lowering the pupil-teacher ratio in the classroom. The characteristics of the PAS seem to provide a learning environment conducive to enhanced social, emotional and intellectual growth of its pupils and a positive attitude towards learning.

In concluding this OBE three-year study of the PAS, we can suggest the extent to which the PAS appears to be meeting certain criteria, established in an American study*, of "lasting" alternative schools. In analyzing for common characteristics contributing to the survival and success of alternative schools in the U.S., Barbara J. Case found that these schools had recognized the need for resolving five issues: programme, purpose, legitimacy, funding and climate.

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* Case, B.J. "Lasting Alternatives: A Lesson in Survival". Phi Delta Kappan, 62 (8), 554-7: April 1981.

As in the "lasting" alternatives cited in the U.S. study, the PAS programme continues to be attractive to students and parents; it is cultivating uniqueness and emphasizing its difference from traditional education. In considering purpose, the PAS has striven for a clear goal focus and defined philosophy. A balance between stability and experimentation has to be found by carefully assessing what it is they do well. As changes in funding, location and administration occurred, a precise sense of purpose has helped them to determine which changes were and were not compatible with survival. The PAS, during its third year, faced with the need to adapt, has been considering its role with respect to the PEC on the one hand and to the demand for extended grades on the other.

An alternative school must gain acceptance as a legitimate educational endeavour by the board of education. The PAS had requested visits from trustees and board personnel, recognizing that in striving to be accepted with the differences, the differences become accepted. Its legitimacy has also been enhanced by self evaluation and external evaluation. A reliable source of funding is provided in that the PAS operates within the framework of public education. Lastly, a positive school climate with the required criteria of respect, trust, caring, opportunity for academic success, access to decision-making and enhanced staff commitment has been achieved.

Since some parental concern has been expressed concerning the transfer from alternative to regular schooling, it is suggested that a follow-up study be made of PAS students with respect to adjustment, self-concept and academic achievement after transfer to a regular school.

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the directors of the components of the PEC
the school psychologist
the chairpersons of committees
the parents who responded to questionnaires and structured telephone interviews

OVERVIEW

In the spring of 1982, the Ottawa Board of Education endorsed the concept of a Primary Education Centre (PEC). It opened in the fall of 1982 with four components, namely, the Primary Alternative School (PAS), the Parent Preschool Resource Centre (PPRC), the Carleton Preschool and the Childbirth Association.

An overview of the concept of a PEC, brief descriptions of all four components of the PEC and the development of an operational philosophy for the PAS were presented in three previous reports (Research Reports 83-04, 84-03 and 84-04). These reports also included a description of specific aspects of the PAS, a profile of the pupils on entry to the PAS, and the role of parents as volunteers and as committee participants. In addition, the views expressed by parents in response to questionnaires distribtued during the first two years of the school's operation were presented.

This final report is an updating of areas covered in the earlier reports with reference made to any changes or modifications over the three years. The views of two specific categories of parents, namely, those whose child had been enrolled in the PAS for all three years and those whose child was enrolled for the first time this year, are presented in this report.

During the three years of the proposed three-year trial period for the PAS, five types of data-gathering activities have been carried out:

(1) Interviews with staff members of the PAS and other components of the Primary Education Centre and with chairpersons of committees, in order to present historical and descriptive material

(2) Parent questionnaires, with some items for continuing families and others specifically for parents of new students

(3) Structured telephone interviews of parents of children completing three years at the PAS in 1985

(4) A structured telephone survey of families with children enrolled at the PAS in 1982-83 but no longer at the school in 1983-84, in order to determine what type of schooling these children were attending and their reasons for leaving the PAS

(5) Achievement testing of primary level students during the second year only. This was done to provide information for teachers and to provide descriptive data on the groups of students at each age level.

THREE YEARS OF A PRIMARY EDUCATION CENTRE

The Concept

When the PEC opened in September 1982 it was envisaged as an enriching environment for children and their families. It was intended to provide integrated services in the one location. These parents' expressed desire for such a centre coincided, in timing and philosophy, with the release in 1980 of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Education of the Young Child by Laurier L. Lapierre. The model presented in the Commission report was modified by the proponents of the PEC so that only one Ministry, namely the Ministry of Education, would be involved in its jurisdiction.

The stated goals of the PEC were:

- To provide a rich sense of community for the families involved - a type of extended family for some

- To provide an educational programme which recognizes the individuality of children and allows them to progress at their own rate of development

- To plan educational and social events in which children, parents and staff can participate together.

The Components

When it opened as a centre in September 1982, the Primary Education Centre contained four components: the Primary Alternative School, the Parent Preschool Resource Centre, the Carleton Preschool and the Childbirth Association. By the second year there were three components, the Childbirth Association having moved to other premises, partly because the rented facilities were expensive and unsuitable and the parking was inadequate. This group also felt that being part of the PEC did not serve their purpose. However, the group continues to maintain contact with the PPRC.

The Primary Alternative School. A characteristic of this school for four- to eight-year-old children is its ungraded structure which is intended to assure flexibility in grouping and to allow each child to progress socially and academically at his or her own rate. During the first year, there was considerable parent input, with much time, thought and energy devoted to discussing the philosophy and goals of the school. As currently expressed in the pamphlet The Primary Education Centre, the goals include development of academic excellence in basic curriculum concepts (e.g., language arts, mathematics, science) and of basic skills (e.g., writing, spelling, thinking, decision-making) approached through group-oriented and individualized activities and exploration into language, movement, music and drama. An integrated curriculum, approached through experiential activities, is meant to present to the child the opportunity to develop as a whole person. Objectives for the school are based upon the philosophical guidelines of the Ontario Ministry of Education and the Ottawa Board of Education curriculum guidelines.

Parents are viewed as the child's first teachers. Under the direction of the Principal, they are expected to support and to participate in the development of the school as far as their circumstances permit. The aim is to create within the school a warm, happy climate allowing the child to feel secure and confident.

The Parent Preschool Resource Centre. The PPRC had already been in operation prior to 1982 and had an established philosophy and goals. The primary aim of the PPRC is to support, strengthen and educate parents so that they can in turn ensure the social, physical, emotional and intellectual development of their children in the very important first five years. The strength and direction of the Centre comes from the involvement of parents in the policy planning and in the on-going programmes.

The variety of programmes and services to meet this aim continued during the third year of the PEC. It offered a daily drop-in for parents with their children; "hands-on" workshops for parents with their children together; a community-based Outreach programme; a reference and lending library; a toy-lending library; an information and referral service and a monthly newsletter. During the third year there was an emphasis on preparation for the transition from preschool to the first day of school. Because preschool facilities are in the same building as the school, the transition for these children is made comfortably in a familiar, safe environment. It was stated that this one location also enables parents to use the three components, depending on the age and stage of each child. The PEC is valued by the PPRC as providing a continuum from prebirth to school age.

The PPRC was involved in a series of events focussing on school age alternatives or options. It participated with two other preschool organizations in a conference on the preparation of parents of preschool children to consider quality education, what they should be looking for and what they could do as parents.

The Carleton Preschool. This is a government licensed preschool and after-school programme. It is a non-profit, charitable organization whose Board of Directors is comprised primarily of parents.

As outlined in its pamphlet, the programme is designed to encourage children to interact with the school's carefully planned environment. Play is the medium for learning. The programme goals are to provide all children with opportunities to:

- develop their cognitive, emotional, social and physical skills
- become increasingly trusting and curious
- discover learning as a rewarding experience
- be aware of their own rights and respect those of others
- make responsible decisions and solve problems constructively and thus build their self-esteem
- socialize cooperatively.

The school, then, is involved in developing life skills that will enrich the children's present experience and prepare them for living creatively in the future.

Over 20 three- and four-year-old children attend five half days a week from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m. In addition, a similar number attend various programmes in the afternoon. To accommodate PAS parents, many of whom are working, a lunchtime programme is provided for children

attending four- and five-year-old kindergarten in the morning and who then attend the preschool in the afternoon. In accordance with the ungraded structure of PAS, these children are with the three-year-old afternoon preschoolers. As well, there is an afterschool programme for school age children which is available from 3:30 (when the preschoolers depart) until 5:15 p.m. The after-school programme complements the classroom experience, often adding dimensions to a theme already being explored in the classroom. The staffs of the Carleton Preschool and PAS consult with each other regarding special themes.

Sharing by Components

The directors of the components have continued, over the three years, their desire to cooperate with each other in all aspects of mutual concern. These are discussed at the PEC Management Committee, which meets as required. This is comprised of three staff representatives (namely, the principal of the PAS, a staff person from the PPRC and the director of the Carleton Preschool) and representatives from each of the three components of the PEC. In view of the philosophy and the reasons for the establishment of a PEC, this committee felt it was appropriate to express to the Ottawa Board of Education its endorsement of the PEC and the desirability for its continuation.

The sharing of space, equipment and resources continued during the third year. Some joint field trips have taken place, for example visits to the Art Gallery, theatrical productions, films, in-school concerts. An end-of-school picnic is being jointly arranged.

Considered very important by the three components is the continued on-going information exchange with respect to the well-being of the students and decision-making with regard to the timing of an individual child's entry into the all-day programme. Staff consultations and conferencing have increased in the third year. Discussions take place between the preschool and the PAS with the purpose of advising and helping the parents. Also, referrals to appropriate agencies have been made as a result of interaction between the PAS and the PPRC. PAS parents have actively participated in PPRC activities.

The PEC has provided the opportunity for the various professionals to discuss together the education of the young child. They combined their resources and participated in the Ministry of Education Forum on Early Childhood Education.

The director of the Carleton Preschool felt that, in view of the coordinated services offered by the PAS and Carleton Preschool, the Ottawa Board of Education, in keeping with Ministry ideals outlined in the Early Childhood Education Project, is providing a unique, extended and enriched programme for children and families participating in the Primary Education Centre.

THE PAS IN ITS THIRD YEAR

The PAS has remained in the same premises for the three years of operation. During that time some of its space has been shared with the other components of the PEC.

Personnel

In the third year the teaching staff consisted of: the principal at 0.5 time; one teacher for the four-year-old group; two teachers for a five- and six-year-old group; and two teachers for a six- to eight-year-old group. The teacher for French who had been part-time at 0.8 time in the first year became full-time in the second and third years. An extra-curricular music teacher is in the school once a week for a programme with participating students.

Time allocation for a teacher of hard of hearing and speech therapy was 0.3 time in the second and third years. A teacher aide for the profoundly deaf was made available in the third year. The services of a Special Education Withdrawal teacher, a school nurse and a school psychologist were available in each of the three years.

School Programme

A detailed description of the programme provided at the kindergarten and primary level was presented in Research Report 83-04. During the three years there has been an emphasis on flexible scheduling, provision of blocks of time for 'themes' and activity periods during the school day. The expectation and opportunity for parent participation in the classroom and on special projects continued during the three years. Some changes are reported below.

Class groupings. In the first year all kindergarten level children (four- and five-year-olds) were in one group and all primary level (ages six, seven and eight) in another group, with two teachers for each group. Changes in class groupings for four-, five- and six-year olds occurred during the second and third years. The four-year-olds were joined by some of the five-year-olds to form one group during the second year but by the third year they formed a homogeneous group with one teacher. The five-year-olds were divided in the second year into two groups, some being placed with the four-year-old group and some with a six-year-old group. In the third year all five-year-olds were kept together as a group with some six-year-olds. In the second and third years some six-year-olds were grouped with five-year-olds while others were with older children.

French programme. During the first year a room was set aside for core French. During the second year this room became unavailable for French language instruction and so, during the second and third years, instruction in French took place in the students' own class settings. The aim continued to be to develop the use of the language in the child's realistic setting and during a variety of activities, such as art and drama. The children have participated in plays and some were able to write scripts in French. Visits have been made to French Drama performances at the National Arts Centre and to French resource centres. During some field trips the use of French is encouraged. The extensive use of audio-visuals has continued during the third year. Monitors, introduced in the second year, have continued and French-speaking parents have been encouraged to act as volunteers.

Other programme changes. During the third year there has been an added emphasis on drama and music. The students were involved in participation drama and many students have been involved in a music programme and have participated in an OBE Music Sharing Day.

The Pupils

The enrolment at the Primary Alternative School was 126 in September 1982 and 139 in September 1983, an increase of about 10 per per cent over the first school year. In September 1984, the enrolment increased another 4 per cent to a total of 145 pupils. These children belonged to 115 families; 26 families had two children at the school and two families had three children. Table 1 shows the school population in 1984-85 by sex and year of birth. It may be seen that boys made up 56 per cent of the total school population, a proportion similar to that found in the previous two years. The proportion of children in the various grade levels has changed somewhat over the three years of the school's operation; in the third year there was a larger group in grades 2 and 3 than there had been previously.

TABLE 1

POPULATION OF THE PRIMARY ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL
BY SEX AND YEAR OF BIRTH: OCTOBER, 1984

Year of birth	Number of children					Total
	JK	SK	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	
1980	36	0	0	0	0	36
1979	0	34	0	0	0	34
1978	0	0	32	0	0	32
1977	0	0	2	12	1	15
1976	0	0	1	10	17	28
Sex						
Male	18	18	22	12	11	81
Female	18	16	13	10	7	64
TOTAL	36	34	35	22	18	145

Table 2 indicates the number of children at the Primary Alternative School in 1984-85 who were new to the school and those who were there for their second or third year. It also shows the number of students from families who had been associated with the school in its first or second year. Two children who had been at the school in its first year but had been out of the country in 1983-84 returned to the school in 1984-85.

TABLE 2

NUMBER OF NEW AND CONTINUING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AT EACH GRADE LEVEL IN THE PRIMARY ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL, 1984-85

Year at PAS	Number of children					Total
	JK	SK	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	
First	36	7	4	1	1	49
Second	0	27	11	5	2	45
Third	0	0	20*	16	15*	51
Continuing families	15	28	31	21	17	112
New families	21	6	4	1	1	33

* These two groups each include one child who had been out of the country in 1983-84

As part of the City-wide Testing programme of the Ottawa Board, all pupils take the Gates-MacGinitie reading test in the winter or early spring of their grade 3 year. March 1985 results on this test were available for 23 children at the PAS, six of whom had been designated as grade 2 on the October class lists. Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation for this group. City-wide results for 1985 had not been compiled at the time of writing, but descriptive statistics are shown for all OBE students who took this test in 1984. It will be seen that the mean score for the PAS pupils was almost identical to that for the entire OBE group on the vocabulary section, and slightly, but not significantly, higher on the comprehension subtest.

TABLE 3

GATES-MACGINITIE READING TEST SCORES: PAS 1985 AND OBE 1984

Group	Year	Vocabulary			Comprehension		
		Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N
PAS	1985	33.8	7.8	23	34.5	6.7	23
All OBE	1984	33.7	7.9	1502	32.3	7.1	1496

The psychologist, having served at the school over the past five years, was in a position to observe the transformation of Lady Evelyn from an elementary community school to a primary alternative one. He had observed a transition to a more tranquil, unified atmosphere without the junior grade pupils. Another difference was apparent in the dynamic instead of static classroom structure, with team teaching of a fluid group determined by age and skill rather than fixed grades. However, he felt the most significant difference between the two concepts lay in the child-centredness of the entire alternative school.

Over the previous three years, approximately ten per cent of the school population had been referred to the Psychology Department, a proportion typical of most schools in the system. Ten children had been recommended for placement in classes for the learning disabled and six had been tested as enrichment candidates. Two were placed in hospital schools due to serious problems. The remaining referrals dealt with children who were experiencing adjustment difficulties.

The psychologist believed that the primary alternative concept was a good one from a psychological viewpoint and had found that all children interviewed said that they preferred the PAS to their previous school. However, he felt that the more immature children tended to be

either over-stimulated or overwhelmed by the dynamic, large group structure of the programme. Other pupils who appeared not to fully benefit from the PAS programme were the learning disabled, whose problems could not be remediated with the limited resources of the school. He recommended frank parent-principal discussions to select out those children with learning needs requiring maximum structure.

Departures from the School

During the first year of the PAS' existence, six kindergarten children were withdrawn because their parents felt that the very structured programme and large class group did not provide an "alternative" education as they envisaged it. Between the end of the first year and the end of the second, another 41 pupils left the school, six of whom had reached the junior level and six of whom had moved out of the city. Structured telephone interviews with 22 families representing 26 children who had left the school indicated that the most frequently given reasons for the change of school were: enrolment in a French immersion programme (36 per cent of families interviewed), attendance at a neighbourhood school (32 per cent), dissatisfaction with the kindergarten programme in the first year (23 per cent), and the feeling that the PAS was not sufficiently alternative or innovative (23 per cent).

Between its second and third year of operation, a total of 44 children left the Primary Alternative School, including six who had reached the junior level. Table 4 shows the location or type of programme which these children entered. It may be seen that the largest group (29 per cent of those who had not yet reached grade 3) moved to the newly-opened alternative school in the west end of the city.

TABLE 4

NUMBER OF CHILDREN FROM THE PRIMARY ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL LEAVING THE SCHOOL BETWEEN ITS SECOND AND THIRD YEARS

Destination in 1984-85	Number of children from 1983-84					Total
	JK	SK	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	
Ottawa Board programmes						
West Alternative School	1	6	3	1	0	11
Regular English programme	1	2	1	0	5	9
Special education class	0	0	1	4	0	5
French immersion	3	0	1	0	0	4
French school	1	0	0	0	0	1
Other boards						
Waldorf school	2	2	1	0	0	5
Carleton Board school	1	0	1	0	0	2
Separate Board school	0	0	0	0	1	1
Moved from area	2	1	2	1	0	6
TOTAL	11	11	10	6	6	44

Another seven children left the Primary Alternative School during the school year 1984-85. Two children were withdrawn from the four-year-old kindergarten because they appeared to be too young to cope with the programme and the bussing arrangements. One of these was re-enrolled in January. Two children (five-year-olds) transferred to a French Immersion class. One child was transferred to the McHugh School. Two children left the OBE system, one to another board in the area and one to another town.

The Parents

Parent involvement was evident in the form of school-time volunteering and participation in committee work during the three years of operation. The extent and nature of volunteering changed somewhat over the three years. Each year, a few parents were unable to participate because of personal reasons. A few changed from active in-school work to assisting in other ways, at times convenient to them. However, a strong commitment to the principle of volunteerism continued.

As volunteers. Parents have continued to be volunteers in the classroom, in the library, during lunch hour, on school trips and on special projects. A tally from the Volunteer Book (a record of volunteer work) indicated that the following number of parents had acted as volunteers in the school from September 1984 to April 1985:

September:	4	January:	74
October:	101	February:	87
November:	118	March:	67
December:	47		

The actual number of volunteering occasions listed in the Volunteer Book appears to be fewer than given in the first seven months of 1983-84 by about a third. Additional data on volunteers are presented in the section on questionnaire responses.

As committee members. Working on committees has been an important feature of the volunteer work of parents at this school during the three years. During the third year, the committees have continued with slight modifications.

The Parents' Advisory Committee. This committee, originally formed in the first year, became known in the second year as the All Parents' Group, since the emphasis was on involving parents in all parents' meetings. It has resumed its original title and now consists of a chairperson, a secretary-treasurer and the chairperson of each subcommittee. This core group continues to meet once a month. It is responsible for drawing up the agenda for the All Parents' Meetings, for looking at possible facets of parent education and reviewing committee reports. It has also discussed the philosophy of the school and aims to have parent input into philosophical decisions. It has looked at the PEC as a whole and studied the extension of the PAS to the Junior level. Communication with school administrators is stressed and the chairperson meets with the principal once a week.

Parent Involvement Committee. This has functioned during the three years and now consists of a chairperson and eleven members, meeting once a month. The main thrust has been to oversee parent involvement in the school and to assist with anything to do with the operating of the school. It has organized social activities for parents and children, such as a Hallowe'en party, a Christmas lunch and a wind-up parent workshop for continuing and new parents. Using parent volunteers it has organized skating activities once a week and has provided a hot lunch for the students once a month. It was reported that the number of involved parents was fairly satisfactory this year but that there was still room for improvement. Since a number of parents are working during school hours, the nature of parent involvement has

changed for those persons. Their contribution now consists of preparing materials at home such as teaching aids, typing and baking.

Parent Education Committee. During the three years, this committee has continued to organize part of the programme for all parent meetings by bringing in guest speakers and resource persons.

Newsletter Committee. The publication of a newsletter has continued this year on a bi-monthly basis, again with contributions from parents, teachers and students. The design, reporting and compiling are undertaken by parents who have this year used specific school facilities for the purpose. The expenses continued to be met from a parents' operating budget.

Fundraising coordinator. In the first two years, fund raising was undertaken by the Parent Involvement Committee. In the third year, a coordinator of fundraising was designated.

Expanding the School Committee. The ad hoc Committee on Expanding the School, struck in the second year, was very active during the third year. It first investigated the views of parents as to the desirability of extending the range of grades offered at the Primary Alternative School. Having ascertained the parents' interest, it found out from the parents how they should proceed. Trustees were lobbied and a presentation made to the Board. Having realized its goal of an alternative grade 4 class, the committee has been disbanded.

INFORMATION OBTAINED BY PARENT INTERVIEWS AND QUESTIONNAIRES

The parents were surveyed for information and opinions in each of the three years. Data from the 1983 and 1984 spring all-parent surveys were presented in the three reports listed on page 1.

In the spring of 1985, two categories of PAS parents were surveyed. The first target group, consisting of families who had had children at the school since its first year of operation, were asked in a structured telephone interview to describe their perceptions regarding the school's development and their educational objectives both for their own particular child and for the school as a whole. It was possible to contact and interview all but one of these 50 families.

The second group of parents to be surveyed consisted of those involved with the PAS for the first time in 1984-85. These 29 families of the 31 new children remaining in the school up to February 1985 were asked to complete questionnaires similar to the ones used in the two previous years, including items about the concept of an alternative school, pupil needs, and parent participation in school-related activities. Response rate was almost 70 per cent for this group.

Although not every student received a questionnaire as in previous years, overall a total of 81 families, or about 70 per cent of the families associated with the PAS, were given the opportunity to express their views concerning the school in 1984-85. The following sections of this report summarize their opinions, including comparison with earlier surveys where applicable. Copies of both 1985 questionnaires are found in Appendix B.

The Concept of an Alternative School

In both 1983 and 1984, parents had been asked to describe the ways in which the PAS should be different from other schools in the system. The characteristics mentioned most often were greater individualization, more parent involvement, child-centred and activity-oriented methods of instruction, and the development of all facets of the child. When parents new to the school in 1984-85 were asked the same question, 16 of the 19 who responded to this item mentioned either that children should be able to progress at their own rate, that the PAS should be flexible and unstructured, or that there should be more individual attention. Four respondents mentioned greater parent involvement in the school.

When asked whether the PAS was achieving the objectives as described in the first part of the question, 16 of these 19 parents said "yes" or "to a large extent". Thus the small group of new families surveyed in 1985 responded similarly to the larger groups of the previous two years, with about 80 per cent of respondents feeling that the PAS was achieving its objectives completely or partially.

When the third-year parents were asked whether they felt that the PAS was fulfilling the concept of an alternative school, all but one responded that, according to their perceptions and within the given terms of reference, it was accomplishing what it set out to do, either wholly or in part. Several parents felt that the constraints under which the school had to operate, especially the pupil-teacher ratio, prevented it from being completely "alternative". A few other respondents felt that the early "teething problems" had been overcome.

One item included for the first time in 1985 on the questionnaire for new families asked respondents to rate the importance of several factors in their decision to send their child to the PAS. As may be seen in Table 5, the focus on individual progress and the hands-on learning methods were the aspects of the school which were very important to the highest proportion of respondents.

TABLE 5

IMPORTANCE OF SEVERAL FACTORS IN CHOICE OF THE PAS
BY NEW FAMILIES, 1985

Factor	Number of respondents		
	Very import.	Somewhat import.	Not import.
The focus on individual progress	21	0	0
The programme based on hands-on learning	18	3	0
The principle of parent involvement	14	5	2
The concept of the Primary Education Centre	14	4	3
The ungraded structure of the PAS	8	13	0
The location of the school	7	11	3
The inclusion of only primary school children	6	7	6

The 1985 new families were asked, as were respondents in the previous years, to rate the availability of 26 items which were generally considered important to the PAS. In 1984 mean ratings based on a three-point scale (1 for always to 3 for never) had ranged from 1.1 to 1.8, while in the previous year most aspects had been considered slightly less available for PAS pupils. On only two items (educational trips and organized noon-time activities) did the mean rating for the 1985 group differ from that for 1984 by more than 0.2. Some differences might be explained by the higher proportion of kindergarten parents among the 1985 respondents. (See Table A-1 in Appendix A.)

Table 6 shows mean ratings based on the responses of groups from all three years to an item which asked parents to rate from 1 (high) to 4 (low) their degree of satisfaction with five aspects of the PAS. In 1984, the distributions of responses from new and continuing families were significantly different for all five aspects, whereas the responses of the two 1985 groups differed only for "implementation of the PAS programme". There appears to be a high degree of satisfaction with these aspects of the school and a trend towards increasing satisfaction over the three years of its operation.

TABLE 6

SATISFACTION WITH FIVE ASPECTS OF THE PRIMARY ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL, 1983 TO 1985

Aspect	Mean rating of satisfaction				
	1985		1984		1983
	New	3-yr.	New	Cont.	all
Rapport between child and teacher	1.3	1.1	1.1	1.3	1.4
School climate	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.4	1.5
Implementation of PAS programme	1.2	1.5	1.3	1.5	1.9
Methods of instruction	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.5	1.6
Administration of the school	1.2	1.5	1.2	1.5	1.6
Total in group	22	49	33	65	93

In 1985 the third-year parents were asked a specific question about preferences regarding a primary alternative school standing alone as opposed to one that was a component in a primary education centre. About 70 per cent favoured the PEC concept, with the remainder split between opting for a PAS alone and not answering. This is a question which appeared to create a dilemma for a number of parents, primarily

because of space problems in the present building. Several of those who favoured the concept of the PEC added qualifying remarks such as "but if it's a choice because of space, I'd opt for a PAS alone". The possibility of extending alternative schooling to the junior grades and the need for coordination among the components were other considerations mentioned.

Table 7 indicates the extent to which PAS families surveyed in 1984 and 1985 made use of the other components of the PEC. From 10 per cent to over a third of respondents in the various groups indicated that they had made some use of these facilities. The information available does not indicate whether they had used the other components in previous years.

TABLE 7

EXTENT TO WHICH PAS FAMILIES USED OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE PRIMARY EDUCATION CENTRE: PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE, 1984 AND 1985

Frequency	Per cent of respondents using					
	Carleton Preschool			Parent Presch. Res. Centre		
	1985:New	1985:3-yr	1984	1985:New	1985:3-yr	1984
Daily	24	10	10	0	4	5
3 to 5 times/week	5	0	0	5	4	11
Monthly or less	5	0	5	19	8	19
Not at all	61	88	68	57	84	60
No response	5	2	17	19	0	5
Total in group	21	49	82	21	49	82

The comments of new families surveyed in 1985 indicated that they felt that the presence of the other components of the PEC had a positive effect on the PAS. Parents saw these facilities as providing

continuity for both child and parents and support for families of young children in developing the philosophy and practice of child rearing. No respondents in 1985 mentioned negative efects on the PAS resulting from the presence of the other components.

Over 60 per cent of the third-year parents surveyed in 1985 stated that there had been positive changes in the way they felt about the school over the three years of its existence. They stated that many of the problems which had occurred in the first year had been resolved, rapport between staff and parents had improved and everyone had become more comfortable. Three or four parents mentioned that the initial high expectations for the school had had to be somewhat tempered by the realities of implementing the philosophy behind the concept. A few parents had specific concerns: that anticipated changes had not occurred, that there was no pervasive philosophy, that the PAS had not proved suitable for a given child, that the school had lost its Special Education teacher, and that some children may have problems changing to another type of school. The overall impression given by the answers to this question, however, is one of increasing satisfaction on the part of parents who have seen the development of the school since its first year.

Pupil Needs

Table 8 shows the number of new families in the past two years who indicated that their child was experiencing difficulty in the areas of social adjustment, emotional adjustment and academic progress, both at the beginning and in the middle of the school year. As in previous years, the social and emotional problems described by the 1985 parents

mainly involved the adjustment of children to a new school, most often shy or immature kindergarten pupils.

TABLE 8

PARENTS' VIEWS OF DIFFICULTIES EXPERIENCED BY NEW PAS CHILDREN IN SEPTEMBER AND FEBRUARY, 1983-84 AND 1984-85

Area	Year	September		February	
		No. responding	No. with difficulty	No. responding	No. with difficulty
Social Adjustment	1984-85	22	7	21	2
	1983-84	43	12	42	0
Emotional Adjustment	1984-85	22	4	20	1
	1983-84	42	9	41	2
Academic Progress	1984-85	20	4	15	0
	1983-84	42	6	41	3

In 1984, parents' suggestions for other specialists or facilities needed at the school included a physical education instructor, playground equipment, a music programme and an improved French programme. The only suggestion offered by new families in 1985 was for an after-school programme.

Another questionnaire item asked parents whether they had observed any benefits to their child as a pupil at the PAS as compared to previous schooling; this question was directed to all families in 1983 and to new families in 1984 and 1985. Half of the two later groups, which included a high proportion of parents of junior kindergarten pupils, indicated that their child had had no previous school or did not answer this question. Of those who did respond, however, a high proportion (from 74 to 88 per cent) responded in the affirmative. The benefits

described by the small group of respondents in 1985 included improved attitude to school, academic progress, increased self-confidence and social development. The benefits noted were similar to those mentioned in previous years by larger groups of respondents.

As in the case of earlier respondents, both groups of families surveyed in 1985 were asked about the suitability of the PAS for their child at the present stage. Only 2 per cent of the 1983 group had felt that the PAS had not been a suitable choice of school for their child; in the three years, all other parents who responded to this question answered 'yes' or 'partially'. The proportion of those answering the question who gave an unqualified positive response rose from 83 per cent in 1983 to over 95 per cent in the second and third years.

About 20 per cent of the third-year parents said there had been positive changes in their impression of the suitability of the PAS over the three years. Several mentioned specific aspects which had been good for their child, such as the self-directed learning, the flexibility of the programme and the choice of reading material. Only a few parents expressed specific concerns, such as a child's need for special help with reading and uncertainty about the child's ability to fit into a different school the following year.

Parent Participation

Since a high degree of parent involvement has been described as an important characteristic of the PAS, the extent of parent participation, both as volunteers during the school day and as committee members, has been examined by means of the parent questionnaires over the three years of the school's existence. Both frequency of participation

and number of hours devoted to school-related activities of the above types are discussed in the following sections. Mention was also made in an earlier section of the number of volunteer occasions shown in the log book at the school.

Volunteering during the school day. Table 9 shows the per cent of respondents in the three years who had participated as volunteers at the school during the day. The small group of families surveyed in 1985 appears to have served somewhat less often in this capacity but the difference between this group and the ones for the other two years is significant only for the month of September.

TABLE 9

PROPORTION OF PARENTS VOLUNTEERING AT THE SCHOOL DURING THE SCHOOL DAY: PARENT QUESTIONNAIRES, 1983 TO 1985

Month	Per cent of parents volunteering			
	1984-85	1983-84		1982-83
	New	New	Cont.	All
September	15	50	66	30
October	45	52	71	51
November	50	68	72	62
December	45	55	74	57
January	45	60	63	62
Total in group	20	32	49	86

The number of hours devoted to in-school volunteering is shown in Table 10 for respondent families in the three years. It may be seen that the average number of hours per family increased substantially in the second year. The average for the 1985 group was somewhat less, but

it should be remembered that the small group of new families surveyed in the third year may not be typical of the total group of parents.

TABLE 10

NUMBER OF HOURS SPENT BY PARENTS AS VOLUNTEERS AT THE SCHOOL DURING THE SCHOOL DAY: PARENT QUESTIONNAIRES, 1983 TO 1985

	Number of hours spent by parents		
	1984-85	1983-84	1982-83
September	30	312	110
October	61	296	174
November	72	294	200
December	70	271	226
January	65	311	190
Total number of hours	298	1484	900
Number in group	20	77	86
Average per family	15	19	10

Table 11 shows responses of the two 1985 groups surveyed and the two earlier groups to a question about satisfaction with the extent of their participation as a volunteer at the school during the day. A similar proportion of each group expressed satisfaction with the extent of their participation, although a higher proportion of the 1985 groups indicated that they were not able to participate for personal reasons.

TABLE 11

SATISFACTION WITH EXTENT OF PARTICIPATION AS VOLUNTEERS: PARENT QUESTIONNAIRES, 1983 TO 1985

Response	Per cent of respondents			
	1985		1984	1983
	3-year	New	All	All
I am satisfied	43	33	36	34
Would like to have participated more often	8	24	27	40
Not poss. to participate for personal reasons	45	33	26	18
Other	4	0	1	0
Don't know/no response	0	10	10	8
Total in group	49	21	82	86

More than 40 per cent of the third-year parents indicated that their involvement in the school had decreased over the past three years, while nearly 15 per cent said that it had increased. Explanations given for these changes most often involved personal reasons and changes in work situation or other commitments, but the age and number of children in the school was also mentioned as a factor by several.

After-school meetings and interviews. One question asked each year related to attendance at committee meetings, all-parent meetings and interviews during the first five months of the school year. For each month in the first year, approximately a third of respondents reported that they had attended committee meetings; the proportion decreased significantly in the second year.

Attendance at all-parent meetings was reported by about two thirds of respondents in the first two months of the school's operation, dropping to 15 per cent by January 1983. Participation in all-parent

meetings was reported to be significantly lower in the first three months of 1983-84 than it had been in the previous year. In each month of 1984-85 except December, from 40 to 60 per cent of new families surveyed reported that they had attended all-parent meetings.

Over half of the respondent families indicated that they had attended interviews at the school in November of each year. In the other months, from 5 to 20 per cent of respondents indicated that they had taken part in school interviews. Further details about attendance at meetings and interviews is shown in Table A-2 in Appendix A.

The number of hours reported by parents as being spent in meetings and interviews is shown in Table 12. When the average number of hours spent both as a volunteer during the school day and in after-school meetings are combined (Tables 10 and 12), it may be seen that the totals are similar for respondent groups in the three years. It appears that there are some shifts in the type of effort contributed to the school, rather than a change in the total amount of time devoted to school-related activities.

TABLE 12

NUMBER OF HOURS SPENT BY PARENTS IN AFTER-SCHOOL MEETINGS: PARENT QUESTIONNAIRES, 1983 TO 1985

	Number of hours spent by parents		
	1984-85	1983-84	1982-83
September	56	124	282
October	48	100	289
November	47	106	273
December	27	74	125
January	42	102	105
Total number of hours	220	506	1074
Number in group	21	75	82
Average per family	10	7	13

Communication with the school. Table 13 shows responses of parents surveyed in the three years to a question about satisfaction concerning communication with the principal of the PAS and with the teachers. There is a significant difference among the three respondent groups in the proportion who were "completely satisfied" regarding communication with the teachers, but not regarding communication with the principal. The proportion who were "not satisfied" is relatively small in all cases.

TABLE 13

SATISFACTION REGARDING COMMUNICATION WITH PRINCIPAL AND TEACHERS AT THE PAS: PARENT QUESTIONNAIRES, 1983 TO 1985

Communication with	Year	Per cent of respondents				No. in group
		Completely satisfied	Partially satisfied	Not satisfied	No response	
Principal	1984-85	76	24	0	0	21*
	1983-84	65	26	2	7	82
	1982-83	67	23	8	2	86
Teachers	1984-85	76	19	5	0	21*
	1983-84	72	23	0	5	82
	1982-83	55	30	12	3	86

* New parents only

Modifications

New families. When asked whether modifications were needed in the school, none of the 1985 respondents indicated that they felt there should be many changes, while 5 and 13 per cent of the 1984 and 1983 groups believed that many changes were needed. On the other hand, about a third of 1985 respondents felt no modifications were necessary,

as compared to 8 per cent in 1984 and 15 per cent in 1983. The remainder who answered this question (64 per cent in 1985, 87 per cent in 1984 and 72 per cent in 1983) felt a few modifications were needed at the school.

Of the eight respondents to the 1985 questionnaire who suggested particular changes, six mentioned extending the grade levels at the PAS beyond grade 3. Three mentioned improvements in the transportation arrangements and two mentioned facilities and equipment. These three items were among the suggestions made most frequently in the previous year.

Third-year families. In the telephone interview with third-year parents, the question about modifications to the school was asked in a slightly different format, with parents being able to answer yes or no to each of five different areas. As shown in Table 14, no more than 30 per cent of this group felt changes were necessary in any aspect except the last.

TABLE 14

PER CENT OF PARENTS WHO FELT THAT MODIFICATIONS WERE NEEDED IN SEVERAL ASPECTS OF THE PAS: THIRD-YEAR FAMILIES, 1985

Aspect of school	Per cent of respondents		
	Changes needed	Changes not needed	No response
The school's philosophy	10	80	10
Curriculum	22	74	4
Communication system	20	80	0
Transportation arrangements	27	55	18
Range of age or grade levels	71	27	2

Five parents did not answer the part of the question about the school's philosophy because they said they were not sure what it was. Suggested modifications included more parent involvement, clarification of the school's philosophy, less structure and an improved pupil-teacher ratio. Several suggestions were given for curriculum changes. For example, three parents wished for more French and three mentioned more physical education or organized sports.

Ten parents felt that the communication system could be improved, most often mentioning announcements that did not reach home. Overcrowding on the school bus and the length of time spent on the bus were the main complaints about transportation arrangements from those whose children were bussed. Two parents stated that they provided their own transportation because of these problems.

The range of ages or grade levels at the school was the given area where the highest proportion of respondents (over 70 per cent) felt modifications were needed. Of those desiring change, the majority (30 out of 35 respondents) wanted the school to be extended to higher grade levels; extension to grade 4, to grade 6 or to grade 8 were each suggested by several respondents. Four other parents felt that the ranges of ages within some of the classes was too great.

Plans for the Future

When the third-year families were asked in 1985 about the sort of education desired for their child after the PAS, nearly half expressed a preference for a continuation of alternative education. Another 12 per cent expected to enrol their child in grade 4 entry French immersion. At the time the survey was undertaken in early spring the re-

mainder of the group appeared to be uncertain about their plans but were considering options such as French immersion, a regular English class or a grade 4 alternative class. Since less than a third of the children in this group were in grade 3, the decision was not an immediate one for many of the families interviewed.

Parents expressed several viewpoints about the preferred arrangements for extensions to alternative classes. Since these interviews were conducted about the same time as announcements were made about the locations for grade 4 immersion and a grade 4 alternative class, parents may not have had all the information necessary to make a decision. As was the case in 1984, most parents did appear to feel that the continuation of schooling with the same philosophy as the PAS was desirable.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The PAS, a component of a PEC, is in its third year of operation. During the first year an enthusiastic and determined effort was made by administration, staff and parents to work together towards an acceptable and feasible working philosophy. This effort continued during the second and third years as parents realistically assessed both ideals and constraints. A few parents were unwilling to wait through this necessary initial period and withdrew their children. By the third year, parents' energies were being focussed on discussing ways and means of extending the alternative system to higher grades. This must be considered as parents' endorsement of the OBE's first venture into primary alternative education.

In concluding this OBE three-year study of the PAS, we can suggest the extent to which the PAS appears to be meeting certain criteria, established in an American study*, of "lasting" alternative schools. In analyzing for common characteristics contributing to the survival and success of alternative schools in the U.S., Barbara J. Case found that these schools had recognized the need for resolving five issues: programme, purpose, legitimacy, funding and climate.

As in the "lasting" alternatives cited in the U.S. study, the PAS programme continues to be attractive to students and parents; it is cultivating uniqueness and emphasizing and enlarging on its difference from traditional education. In considering purpose, the PAS has striven for a clear goal focus and defined philosophy. This was considered essential for defending school offerings and for gathering

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* Case, B.J. "Lasting Alternatives: A Lesson in Survival". Phi Delta Kappan, 62 (8), 554-7: April 1981.

support. All of the survivors studied seemed to have eventually found the necessary balance between stability and experimentation, which comes from carefully assessing what it is they do well and then protecting those elements during programme changes. As changes in funding, location and administration occurred, alternative schools have had to make corresponding adaptations. Without a precise sense of purpose, it would be difficult to determine which changes were and were not compatible with survival. The PAS, during its third year, faced with the need to adapt, has been considering its role with respect to the PEC on the one hand and to the demand for extended grades on the other.

Case also points out that an alternative school must be recognized as '<u>legitimate</u>' by members of the educational community. It must gain acceptance as a legitimate educational endeavour by the board of education, the local superintendent, etc. Trustees and principals should be encouraged to visit. The PAS has requested such visits, recognizing that in striving to be accepted with the differences, the differences become accepted. Some have started as experiments to verify that certain ideas "work" and so gain legitimacy when they actually produced the predicted outcomes. Likewise, the setting up of a PEC with the PAS as one of four components was an experiment of the OBE to provide a centre that would meet the requirements of families with young children through preschool and primary levels. The continued enthusiasm of parents, teaching staff and directors to the concept indicates that it is "working". Its legitimacy has also been enhanced by self-evaluation and external evaluation.

"Lasting" alternative schools must have a reliable source of <u>funding</u>. This is met in that the PAS operates within the framework of

public education and per pupil costs are held at a level commensurate with such costs in other schools.

The fifth issue raised in the American study was that of a positive school climate. In this, the PAS, both its staff and parents, reported satisfaction and enthusiasm with the school climate as they felt productive and satisfied. The required criteria, respect, trust, caring, opportunity for academic success, access to decision making and enhanced staff commitment have all been cited as contributing to the positive climate of the PAS.

The commitment to the concept of a primary alternative school has been sustained through its three years of operation. A working philosophy was produced, communication between staff and parents strengthened, parent participation was maintained and parent satisfaction that their children's needs were being met was expressed.

Recommendation

Some parental concern has been expressed concerning the transfer from a primary alternative school to a regular school within the OBE. It is therefore recommended that a longitudinal study be undertaken of those students who had completed the primary level and had been enrolled for at least two years in the PAS with respect to adjustment, self-concept and academic achievement.

APPENDIX A

MORE DETAILED TABLES

TABLE A-1

PARENTS' VIEWS REGARDING OPPORTUNITY TO EXPERIENCE 26 ASPECTS OF SCHOOL LIFE, PRIMARY ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL, 1983 TO 1985

Aspect of school	Mean rating* of opportunity		
	1985	1984	1983
Develop as a happy and friendly child	1.0	1.1	1.2
Progress at his or her own rate	1.1	1.2	1.6
Acquire a good attitude towards school	1.2	1.1	1.2
Develop a positive attitude towards learning	1.2	1.1	1.2
Develop self-esteem	1.2	1.1	1.2
Share in activities with others	1.2	1.1	1.2
Develop as a self-sufficient child	1.2	1.1	1.3
Respond to well-established routines	1.2	1.1	1.3
Join in unorganized activity during free time	1.2	1.2	1.4
Be creative	1.2	1.2	1.4
Develop self-expression	1.2	1.2	1.4
Use many and varied resources	1.2	1.2	1.6
Have suitable bussing arrangements	1.3	1.5	1.4
Experience appropriate discipline	1.4	1.2	1.4
Experience intellectual stimulation	1.4	1.2	1.5
Make responsible decisions	1.4	1.2	1.6
Have access to health resources, e.g. nurse	1.4	1.5	1.8
Have adequate physical facilities	1.4	1.6	1.7
Join in social activities with parents at school	1.5	1.4	1.7
Have access to OBE resources	1.5	1.5	1.8
Have access to community resources	1.7	1.5	1.8
Participate in a physical fitness programme	1.7	1.6	2.0
Go on educational trips	1.8	1.3	1.9
Participate in a music programme	1.8	1.6	1.7
Experience French as a living language	1.9	1.7	2.0
Join in organized activity during noon time	2.1	1.8	1.6
Total in group	21	98	93

* 1 = always; 2 = sometimes; 3 = never

TABLE A-2

ATTENDANCE AT AFTER-SCHOOL MEETINGS AND INTERVIEWS:
PARENT QUESTIONNAIRES, 1983 TO 1985

Month	Year	Attended committee meetings		Attended all-parent meetings		Attended interviews		No. in group
		N	%	N	%	N	%	
September	1984-85	3	15	12	60	2	10	20
	1983-84	8	11	33	44	9	12	75
	1982-83	25	30	56	68	13	16	82
October	1984-85	2	10	9	45	4	20	20
	1983-84	9	12	27	36	8	11	75
	1982-83	26	32	55	67	10	12	82
November	1984-85	4	20	8	40	11	55	20
	1983-84	10	13	14	19	45	60	75
	1982-83	31	38	38	46	49	60	82
December	1984-85	3	15	4	20	2	10	20
	1983-84	6	8	15	20	9	12	75
	1982-83	26	32	17	21	6	7	82
January	1984-85	2	10	10	50	1	5	20
	1983-84	9	12	18	24	8	11	75
	1982-83	23	28	12	15	5	6	82

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRES USED IN 1985

Feb. 1985

A QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS OF FIRST-TIME PUPILS ATTENDING THE PRIMARY ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL, 1984-85

- Please complete this questionnaire by placing a check in the appropriate box: ☐
- Blanks have been provided so that you can give an explanation if necessary. Additional comments can be added at the end of the questionnaire.
- Questions are grouped under three headings: The PAS Concept, Pupil Needs and Parent Participation.
- If you so wish, each parent may fill out separate questionnaires. Please indicate with a '1' or a '2' in this box how many questionnaires are being completed for this child: ☐
- Please place the completed questionnaire in the attached envelope and return with your child to school or mail to Research Centre, 330 Gilmour Street, Ottawa, K2P 0P9, by Friday, 1st March, 1985.

PUPIL'S SEX: Female ☐ Male ☐ YEAR OF BIRTH: _____

PUPIL'S LEVEL: Junior Kindergarten ☐ Senior Kindergarten ☐ Primary ☐

NAME OF PARENT(S) OR GUARDIAN(S) (optional) _____

NAME OF PUPIL (optional) _____

A. THE PAS CONCEPT

1. Some people feel that provision of the following activities are important aspects of this school. Please indicate the extent of the opportunity for your child to do each during this school year.

	Opportunity		
1. Progress at his or her own rate			
2. Share in activities with others			
3. Respond to well established routines			
4. Make responsible decisions			
5. Join in unorganized activity during free time			
6. Join in organized activity during noon time			
7. Experience French as a living language			
8. Experience appropriate discipline			
9. Use many and varied resources			
10. Go on educational trips			
11. Acquire a good attitude towards school			
12. Develop self-esteem			
13. Participate in a physical fitness programme			
14. Participate in a music programme			
15. Develop as a happy and friendly child			
16. Develop as a self-sufficient child			
17. Develop a positive attitude towards learning			
18. Experience intellectual stimulation			
19. Be creative			
20. Develop self-expression			
21. Have access to OBE resources			
22. Have access to community resources			
23. Have access to health resources e.g. nurse			
24. Join in social activities with parents at school			
25. Have adequate physical facilities			
26. Have suitable bussing arrangements			
27. Other _____ (please specify)			

2. Rate on a scale from 1 (high) to 4 (low) the level of your satisfaction with regard to each of the following during the 1984-85 school year.

	High 1	2	3	Low 4
a. The rapport between your child and his or her teachers				
b. The school climate				
c. The implementation of the PAS programme				
d. Methods of instruction				
e. The administration of the school				

3. Have you noticed any benefit(s) to your child specifically as a pupil of the Primary Alternative School, as compared to previous schooling?

Yes ☐ No ☐ No previous school ☐ Don't know ☐

Please explain. _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. Was this a suitable choice of school for your child at this stage in his or her development?

Yes ☐ Partially ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

Please explain. _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. a. Explain briefly what you think are the <u>one</u> or <u>two</u> most important ways in which the Primary Alternative School <u>should</u> be different from other elementary schools in the system.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

b. Do you think that the Primary Alternative School is achieving this?

_____

_____

_____

6. How important were the following factors in your choice of the PAS for your child? Please check the appropriate columns.

	Very impt.	Moderately	Not impt.
The location of the school			
The concept of the Primary Education Centre			
The principle of parent involvement			
The inclusion of only primary school children			
The focus on individual progress			
The programme based on hands-on learning			
The ungraded structure of the PAS			
Other _____ (please specify)			

7. Do you think that any modification(s) should be made in certain areas, for example, in the school's philosophy, curriculum, communication system, transportation arrangements, location, optimum size of total enrolment, maximum age range, etc.?

Yes, many ☐ Yes, a few ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

If yes, please explain. _____

_____

_____

_____

8. a. To what extent do you at present use the other facilities located in the Primary Education Centre?

	Daily	Weekly	Not at all	Other
Carleton Preschool				
Parent Preschool Resource Centre				

b. In what way(s) do you see the presence of these facilities affecting the school?

_____

_____

_____

B. PUPIL NEEDS

9. Please indicate whether your child has experienced any difficulty in the following areas which affected his or her progress
a. at the beginning of the school year in September 1984, and
b. whether this is still a continuing concern.

	a. Sept. 84		b. Feb. 85	
	YES	NO	YES	NO
Social adjustment				
Emotional adjustment				
Academic progress				
Other _____ (please specify)				

c. If you answered YES to any of the above, please explain.

_____

_____

_____

_____

10. a. If your child received the services of specialized personnel (e.g. school psychologist, remedial reading teacher) during this school year, please indicate the type and when help was received.

Type of specialist	Sept.-Oct. 1984	Nov.-Dec. 1984	Jan.-Feb. 1985

b. Are there any additional special services which you feel are needed at this school?

_____

_____

_____

C. PARENT PARTICIPATION

11. a. For each month during this school year, please indicate by placing a check mark on the appropriate line, about how many times you have been a volunteer at the school during the school day.
    b. In the bottom part of the chart, please estimate the number of hours you have spent each month as such a volunteer.

		Sept. 1984	Oct. 1984	Nov. 1984	Dec. 1984	Jan. 1985
a.	Daily					
	Once or twice a week					
	Once or twice a month					
	Not at all					
b.	Estimate no. of hours					

c. Is the extent of your participation satisfactory to you?

- ☐ I am satisfied with my participation.
- ☐ I would like to have participated more often.
- ☐ I would like to have participated less often.
- ☐ It has not been possible to participate for personal reasons.
- ☐ Don't know.

Please explain. _____

_____

_____

_____

d. Is the nature of your participation satisfactory to you?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

If no, please indicate the type of participation which you would prefer.

_____

_____

_____

_____

12. a. For each month and each type of activity, please indicate by placing a number in each box about how many times you have attended after-school meetings during this school year.

b. In the bottom part of the chart, please estimate the number of hours you have spent each month in after-school meetings.

		Sept. 1984	Oct. 1984	Nov. 1984	Dec. 1984	Jan. 1985
a.	Committee meetings					
	All-parent meetings					
	Interviews					
	Other					
b.	Estimate no. of hours					

13. a. Are you satisfied with the amount of communication between you as parent(s) and

i. the principal? Completely ☐ Partially ☐ No ☐

ii. the teachers? Completely ☐ Partially ☐ No ☐

What suggestions do you have for change? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

*****

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

STRUCTURED TELEPHONE INTERVIEW WITH
THIRD-YEAR PARENTS OF THE PRIMARY ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL
February/March 1985

Parents' Name(s) _____ Phone No. _____

Children's Names(s) _____ Level(s) _____

1. Rate on a scale from 1 (high) to 4 (low) the level of your satisfaction with regard to each of the following during the 1984-85 school year.

	High 1	2	3	Low 4
a. The rapport between your child and his or her teachers				
b. The school climate				
c. The implementation of the PAS programme				
d. Methods of instruction				
e. The administration of the school				

2. Do you think that the Primary Alternative School is fulfilling the concept of an alternative school?

Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

In what ways? _____

_____

_____

3. Do you think any modification(s) should be made in any of the following areas:

a. the school's philosophy Yes ☐ No ☐ _____

_____

b. curriculum Yes ☐ No ☐ _____

_____

c. communication system Yes ☐ No ☐ _____

_____

d. transportation arrangements Yes ☐ No ☐ _____

_____

e. range of age or grade levels Yes ☐ No ☐ _____

_____

4. Thinking of this year, would you say that the PAS was a suitable choice of school for your child at this stage in his or her development?

Yes ☐ Partially ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

Please explain. _____

_____

_____

5 a. Is the extent of your participation as a volunteer at the school during the school day satisfactory to you?

☐ I am satisfied with my participation.

☐ I would like to have participated more often.

☐ I would like to have participated less often.

☐ It has not been possible to participate for personal reasons.

☐ Don't know.

Please explain. _____

_____

_____

b. Is the nature of your participation satisfactory to you?

Yes ☐ More or less ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

If no, please indicate the type of participation which you would prefer.

_____

_____

_____

6 a. To what extent do you at present use the other facilities located in the Primary Education Centre?

	Daily	Weekly	Not at all	Other
Carleton Preschool				
Parent Preschool Resource Centre				

b. Which are you in favour of:

a PAS standing alone ☐ a PAS as a component of a PEC ☐

7. What would you like for your child when he/she completes his/her third year at the PAS?

8 Over the three years of the school's existence, have there been:

a. any changes in the way you feel about the school?

b. any changes in your involvement in the school?

c. any changes in how well the school has suited your child?

9. Is there anything else you would like to add?